



Health inclusivity and self-care

Our Haleon position



Background

For Haleon, health inclusivity means **increasing opportunities for as many people as possible to enjoy better everyday health, including the socially and economically marginalised, and those potentially discriminated against because of disability, age, race and ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.**

Haleon has set the goal of helping millions of people to be more included in opportunities for better everyday health. We plan to reach 50 million people a year by 2025. This is why we are supporting the **Economist Impact Health Inclusivity Index (The Index)**, a tool to evaluate the current state of health inclusivity around the world and show how health inclusivity can be improved.

A more inclusive approach to everyday health would mean that health disparities between population groups could be reduced, which could lead to higher productivity and lower healthcare costs.ⁱ Having access to available, affordable, and high-quality healthcare is important to improving health inclusivity, especially for the most vulnerable.

If health is to become more inclusive, the most important area for improvement is for individuals and communities to have the opportunity and ability to actively engage with and support their own health, and that of their family, through the right systems, tools and education designed to meet everyone where they are.ⁱⁱ

The Index shows that interventions which focus on people and community empowerment - such as health literacy education, self-care guidance, and access to healthcare workers within the community - have a positive impact on health inclusivity even in resource-constrained settings.ⁱⁱⁱ

*Find out more about Haleon's approach and how we are working to improve health inclusivity **here**.*

The Importance of Health Inclusivity

To deliver a truly inclusive approach to health, it must go beyond the traditional infrastructure of health into everyday life.

Having an inclusive and equitable approach to health means empowering all people with the ability to fully participate in their own health, going beyond providing the same service to everyone but meeting people's needs where they are and

supporting them wherever their health is experienced – in their home, work, school, health system, and wider community.

Not taking this approach can mean that certain individuals or communities are left behind, experiencing higher levels of ill health and a lower quality of life. Health inequalities include differences in people’s health, their experience of care, ease of accessing services, and opportunities to lead healthy lives. People’s experience of health inequalities can impact their quality of life, ability to learn, work and engage in their communities.^{iv}

We also know that there is a positive correlation between levels of health inclusivity and healthy life expectancy. Nations with more inclusive approaches to health would expect to experience higher productivity and lower health costs.^v

Ways to improve health inclusivity

Based on analysis from ***The Index***, we have identified several areas where collaborative action could help to improve health inclusivity around the world, outlined below.

1. Focus on everyday experiences of health

Health is largely experienced in everyday settings outside formal healthcare – at home, school, work, and in the wider community. So, health inclusivity cannot be achieved within the health system alone. When seeking to improve health inclusivity, **it is important for governments to look at health from all angles and take a ‘health in all policies’ approach**, accounting for the social determinants of health (the social, political, economic, environmental, and commercial factors which can create health inequalities). This means that factors such as education, income, housing, and air quality that all impact our health every day.^{ix}

93% of countries recognise health as a human right.^{vi}

75% of countries included policies that address social determinants of health.^{vii}

50% of countries showed evidence that government departments work together across sectors to promote health, and of oversight to ensure cooperation.^{viii}

Some groups have also been historically excluded or marginalised due to factors such as race, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or socioeconomic background, meaning they face additional barriers when trying to manage or

improve their health.^x By identifying these vulnerable populations and the social determinants of health that most impact them, and implementing policies to proactively address them, greater inclusivity can be achieved.^{xi}

2. Ensure people can access healthcare that meets their needs

While health inclusivity requires action outside the formal healthcare sector, it is important to ensure that health resources are accessible, easy to navigate, and meet people's healthcare needs.

Having accessible healthcare within the community enables the coordination and provision of care to be tailored and targeted. This means that communities can engage in and influence their health more easily. This can include establishing multi-disciplinary teams with nurses, dentists, pharmacists, and physiotherapists working alongside primary care physicians to address the challenges that many people face when trying to manage their health.^{xii}

It is also important that all aspects of health are considered. For example, the 2021 WHO *Resolution on Oral Health* states that there are "more than 3.5 billion people suffering from [oral diseases]...and the burden of poor oral health remains, especially among the most vulnerable in society".^{xiii} Yet, while 93% of countries in ***The Index*** recognise the right to health, only 50% have a policy or action plan to promote oral health.^{xiv}

Brazil's National Oral Health Policy is an example of oral health assistance being offered through the universal public health system – its policy represents an innovative strategy that focuses on oral healthcare access, that can both increase the number of oral health teams in primary care and expand the availability of specialised oral healthcare.^{xv}

For more information, please see our position on ***The role of pharmacists in self-care*** and ***Improving global oral health***.

3. Empower communities and individuals to engage in their health

From ***The Index***, we know that the countries with the highest overall levels of health inclusivity provide individuals and communities with the tools to take charge of their own health. This includes promoting health literacy, engaging with community health workers, and providing self-care information.^{xvi}

Indonesia has adopted a range of strategies to support people empowerment. The Ministry of Health's 2015-2019 Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases calls for the preparation of patient information materials and guidelines on self-care.^{xvii} Accessible and reliable patient information allows people to participate in their own care and prevent poor health outcomes from an early stage. More information is available in the Economist Impact [***Case Studies***](#).

Health literacy plays an important role in empowering people with the knowledge and tools to engage in their health, as health literacy is the "knowledge, motivation, and competencies of people to access, understand, appraise and apply information to manage health in everyday life regarding health care, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain and promote quality of life during the life course."^{xviii} Understanding the needs of people at all levels of health literacy, and helping to build health literate communities, enables everyone to engage in and improve their everyday health.

In Rwanda, ProLiteracy, an international non-profit organisation (NGO), is working with other NGOs on a three-year health literacy project that aims to improve basic health literacy and specifically address the health needs of women. The project aims to reach around 1,500 women in 20 communities that lack access to education or health services.^{xix} More information is available in the Economist Impact [***Case Studies***](#).

*For more information, please see our statement on [***Health literacy and self-care***](#).*

The role of self-care in improving health inclusivity

Self-care, "the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote their own health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker", can play an important role in all aspects of improving health inclusivity.^{xx}

Self-care empowers people to look after their own health, and the health of their families, in a way that prioritises their **everyday experience of health** outside formal healthcare settings. Self-care can help form a bridge between the traditional settings of healthcare, and the everyday environments, experiences, and actions which impact people's health. Self-care can also support broader concepts of health, such as health promotion, prevention, and wellbeing.

Self-care is part of ensuring people can **access healthcare that meets their needs**, within their community, in a way that works for them. Accessing self-care products and services, with or without the help of a healthcare professional, makes it easier for people to care for themselves and their families every day – whether through twice-daily brushing with a fluoride-containing toothpaste; managing pain; treating coughs, colds and flu at home; or by taking vitamin and mineral supplements to support a healthy diet.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also demonstrated the important role self-care plays as part of a package of health interventions, with people taking steps to prevent infection or managing mild cases at home with the use of self-care products, to protect others and their health systems.

Providing self-care information, and enabling access to self-care, can also **empower people and communities** to take a proactive approach to their health, and that of their family, by giving people the information and tools they need. This needs to be in a form that is meaningful and accessible to them, such as in appropriate languages and formats for vulnerable populations, to ensure that the physical, mental, and emotional dimensions of health are all considered and promoted.

*For more information, please see our position on **The value of self-care**.*

Policy Recommendations

To meaningfully improve health inclusivity, we have supported the creation of **The Index** to help governments, policymakers, health systems, healthcare professionals, regulators, industry, trade associations, and citizens take evidence-based actions to improve health inclusivity together.

Based on this research, we recommend all stakeholders:

- Continue campaigning for access to healthcare, while also championing often overlooked influences on health inclusivity like culture, empowerment, and agency.

We also recommend governments, policymakers and health systems:

- Implement processes to identify vulnerable populations and tackle the barriers preventing them from experiencing better everyday health, including those that focus on the social determinants of health.

-
- Empower communities, vulnerable groups, and individuals to engage in decisions which impact their health.
 - Ensure all aspects of health, including self-care, are accounted for in an inclusive approach to health.
 - Facilitate and formalise collaboration between different parts of governments to take a 'health in all policies' approach.
 - Increase the quantity and variety of high-quality health inclusivity data so high-impact actions can be identified, and progress can be measured more accurately.

*For more information on how we engage policymakers, please see our position on **political advocacy**.*

ⁱ Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index: Measuring Progress Towards Good Health for Everyone*, September 2022, Available from: [EI-Haleon_Report_A4.pdf \(economist.com\)](#)

-
- ii Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- iii Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- iv WHO, *Health Equity*; WHO, *It's time: to build a fairer, healthier world for everyone, everywhere*
- v Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- vi Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- vii Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- viii Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- ix WHO. *Social determinants of health*. Geneva: World Health Organization, Available from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1
- x Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- xi Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- xii Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- xiii WHO, *Oral health*, January 2021, Available From: [Oral health \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/oral-health)
- xiv Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- xv Galvão MHR, Roncalli AG, *Does the implementation of a national oral health policy reduce inequalities in oral health services utilization? The Brazilian experience, 2021*, Available from: [Does the implementation of a national oral health policy reduce inequalities in oral health services utilization? The Brazilian experience - PMC \(nih.gov\)](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34897445/)
- xvi Economist Impact, *The Health Inclusivity Index*
- xvii *Ministry of Health 2015-19 Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases. Jakarta: Kementerian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia; 2015*. Available from: http://p2ptm.kemkes.go.id/uploads/VHcrbkVobjRzUDN3UCs4eUJ0dVBndz09/2018/10/Buku_Rencana_a_Aksi_Nasional_2015_2019.pdf
- xviii Sorensen et al. *Building health literacy system capacity: a framework for health literate systems*, 2021, Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34897445/>
- xix ProLiteracy, *African Women's Literacy & Economic Empowerment*, Available from: <https://www.proliteracy.org/What-We-Do/International/African-Womens-Health-Literacy>
- xx WHO, *Self-care interventions of health*, 2022, Available from: [Self-care interventions for health \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/health-topics/self-care-interventions)